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CORONA/ARGON



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NRO & DIA REVIEWS
COMPLETED

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director (Research) *HS*

SUBJECT: Evaluation of Report

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1. That section of the pertaining to reconnaissance satellites (pages 10-14) has been reviewed by this office in conjunction with the National Photographic Interpretation Center. In addition, the views of the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Reconnaissance Office were solicited and have been incorporated in the evaluation which follows.

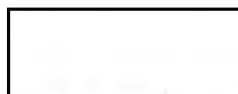
2. It was the general conclusion of the participants in the evaluation that there was little, if anything, contained in the article which could not have been obtained from open sources in the United States such as the daily press, technical trade magazines, and the Congressional Record.

3. Although the information contained in the article is substantially true, there are sufficient inaccuracies and omissions to suggest that the author has taken data from open sources, embroidered it with speculation (offered as fact), and then presented the entire package as an authentic composite picture of the United States satellite reconnaissance program. At best, it represents a rather shallow appreciation of United States space reconnaissance capabilities which could almost be termed "surprising" in light of the vast amount of information which had been openly published on this subject up to the time when this article was written (Dec. 1961).

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4. Significantly, in references to DISCOVERER, one gets the impression that the author considers DISCOVERER to be entirely experimental. There is no indication of a current useful operational capability. One can infer that some Russian technologists are well aware of the theoretical resolution capabilities of satellite photography but that they were not, as of the writing of the article, aware that higher quality photography was currently being obtained, and this was 18 months subsequent to the first successful recovery of DISCOVERER photography.

5. It is also interesting to note that there is no reference in the article to ARGON or the ARGON concept. Geodetic satellites ANNA and SECOR are mentioned, but these projects have been discussed publicly in the United States and are conventional geodetic applications in the sense that they are utilized by observing satellites from the ground for triangulation purposes. The possibility of establishing geodetic control by photography from a satellite (ARGON) is not mentioned. Further, the key principle of satellite camera orientation by star photography is not suggested.

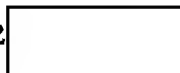
6. In essence, the author has pretty thoroughly explored all of the U. S. satellite programs which have been widely treated in U. S. publications; i. e., SAMOS, MIDAS, DISCOVERER, but there is no reference by name or capability to those programs which have in fact been kept classified e. g., CORONA, ARGON, etc.

7. One seemingly puzzling aspect of this article is its classification (TOP SECRET) if the information has been derived from open sources. There could be, however, several logical explanations for this:

a. The Soviets desire to limit knowledge of the sophistication and diversification of the U. S. space program to a very few high level and trusted military commanders.

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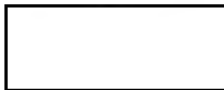
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b. They wish to protect the fact that Soviet researchers and analysts could compile such an extensive appreciation of the U. S. space program from open source publications.

c. The Soviets, due to their security concepts and traditions, cannot psychologically comprehend that this type of information could be anything but TOP SECRET even when they are republishing it from open sources.

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JAMES A. CUNNINGHAM, JR.
Deputy Assistant Director
(Special Activities)

Attachments: (w/orig only)

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